

MITCHELL FIELD FORUM #3 RESULTS

Report from the Harpswell Public Forum, July 31, 2007

Overview of Meeting Process

On July 31, 2007, Mitchell Field Forum #3 was held at Harpswell Islands School from 6:30 – 8:30 PM. Approximately fifty (50) citizens attended the forum. It began with a welcome from a Mitchell Field Steering Committee member, Melinda Small. Alan Holt, an architect and town planner from Holt & Lachman Architects + Planners in Portland, presented three housing options for the roadside area of the site. Barney Baker, from Baker Design Consultants, presented two waterfront schemes for the site.

Housing Options:

The housing options were predicated from findings from the Community Design Workshop (see appendix G & H in particular) which indicated general support for affordable and small scale housing options, particular in clustered development near the road. These strategies (small, clustered houses, near the road) can be designed to address the communities desire to provide more affordable housing options (also expressed in the Town's Comprehensive Plan commitment to provide 5-10 dwellings of affordable housing per year), and while being conservative in the amount of land required from Mitchell Field. Clustered housing can be a lighter impact on the environment and costs by limiting the amount of required infrastructure, and if designed properly, can reflect a traditional New England settlement pattern that is compatible with Harpswell.

The options shown on the following pages are meant to be conceptual ideas on how a limited amount of land could be devoted for housing (in each case, between 2-3 acres), and be arranged to create a sense of community for its residents as well as express a sense of inclusion into the wider Harpswell community.

It should also be noted that the design concepts presented do no address a range of policy issues that are associated with, but distinct from, the site designs. For instance, it is up to the Town to establish what terms of affordability mean (often established according to a percentage of what the means family income for a community can afford in terms of rent or mortgage payments). The median sale price for a single-family home in Harpswell rose from \$167,000 in 1995, to an estimated \$495,000 in 2004, and currently the town is near the top median home price in the State. In contrast, the median home income in Harpswell was \$46,000 in 2004. Roughly speaking, a home costing \$160,000 could be termed "affordable" under some definitions, and a home of \$250,000, or even \$300,000, would be below market. It is up to the Town to make a policy decision on what terms or limits to establish for affordable units, mix of below market units, or perhaps even market rate units. All of the design ideas presented could be modified to accommodate a mix of affordability, according to the town's wishes.

It should also be noted that the ownership options are a policy decision that do not necessarily affect the design ideas presented. For instance, these homes could be home-ownership opportunities, rentals, or a mix. There are options as well as to how the Town

would address property ownership. The Town could maintain ownership of the land beneath the homes, and provide long-term leases for home owners (would presumably pay lease payments for land value instead of taxes, though would likely pay taxes for the building evaluation). Conversely, the Town could sell the land for housing development, with covenants for affordability or with any other requirements determined by the Town, and place both the land and houses onto the tax rolls.

Also note that in all options the access road to Mitchell Field has been moved to the south of the Fire House. This allows for efficient development of the housing location, and provides safer site lines for traffic. In all of the housing options, it would be possible to provide access to the housing development from the Mitchell road, limiting the number of road cuts from Route 123.

Housing Option A



Small single-family houses on small lots face a central common green. The perimeter road is an ally, putting vehicles behind the units. Extra and visitor parking is tucked at the rear of the development. Landscape buffering shields the development from Mitchell Field.

Housing Option B



A loop road defines a central green, like a town common, which also creates a prominent public feature for surrounding community. Single-family home face the green, and a rowhouse of 6 dwellings is at the back of the property. This mix of housing types provide further options on affordability, unit sizes, and ownership models.

Housing Option C



This model places two multi-family dwelling in the development. Each building could accommodate 6 dwellings, and could be designed to be in scale with the traditional “big house, back house, little house, barn” arrangement. Units could be ownership (condominium)

Waterfront Element		Option 1	Option 2
<i>Marine Business 1</i> Shipyard comprises a building and apron of similar size to the East Boothbay operation of Washburn & Doughty	Building	175-ft x 250-ft 175-ft x 175-ft Apron	175-ft x 250-ft 175-ft x 175-ft Apron
	Property Line Buffer	175 LF (building) , 60 LF (road)	175 LF (building), 60 LF (road)
	Shore frontage	550 LF	550 LF
	Acreage	4.5 Acres	4.5 Acres
	Parking	50 Cars (on adjacent waterfront parcel)	50 Cars (terraced from field above building)
<i>Marine Business 2</i> Undefined- Marina, Aquaculture. Etc	Building	Not provided	1920-SF (Recycle Existing)
	Shore frontage		125-ft adjacent to Pier
	Acreage		~ .75 Acres with parking
	Parking		35 Cars
<i>Town Facilities</i>	Buildings	Recycle existing: Harbormaster Office on Pier Restrooms, Classroom, Storage, Etc. options	
	Shore frontage	South of Pier (including Bluffs)	South of Pier (including Bluffs)
	Boat Ramp	Kayaks & Canoe carry in only	Boatramp to deepwater
	Parking	10-Beach access on shore 50-Weekend Share w/Businesses Overflow (35 Cars/15 Trailers)	9-Beach access on shore 50-Weekend Share w/Businesses 50- Overflow
<i>Reuse of Existing Pier</i>	Town Pier	Existing pier improved to provide 6 to 8-ft at Low water	
	Town Floats	Seasonal floats parallel to shore	
	Future Use	Not yet identified- restrict access until developer steps forward.	

Waterfront Option 1



Waterfront Option 2



A vigorous, open public discussion followed the presentation of the Consultant's three housing options and two waterfront options. The Consultant will take the questions and comments from Forum 3 into account when preparing a Final Report. Questions and comments from the audience are included in this report.

Waterfront Questions

Question: How much does each waterfront scheme cost?

Answer: These are very rough estimates: Waterfront Scheme #1 costs about \$650,000. Waterfront Scheme #2 costs about \$350,000.

Question: Could the boat ramp be placed on the other side, more northerly (where a small boat-building operation is currently in the scheme)? Or on the beach? What would be the cost?

Answer: Placing the boat ramp as it is shown in the waterfront scheme saves construction costs and makes sense because of the direction of prevailing winds. The boat ramp would not be a good fit for the beach area because the ideal grade is 15%, and the beach is only 5%.

Question: Can either waterfront scheme have a kayak carry-down?

Answer: Yes, definitely.

Question: Would these schemes create competition for existing fishermen?

Answer: They shouldn't; the schemes are more about public access, which surveys have said is desirable.

Question: How much noise pollution from ship-building facility?

Answer: You would have to consult Washburn and Doughty.

Question: Is the beach people-friendly? How much water on beach at high tide?

Answer: It will be a rocky Maine beach, not a nice sandy beach, but people can walk on it, and picnic nearby. There is not very much water at high tide.

Question: Heavy use of Rt. 123 by Washburn and Doughty?

Answer: [A participant mentions that] Washburn and Doughty said there would be big deliveries once a week, and smaller deliveries throughout the week.

Question: Is it possible for Washburn and Doughty to take up less than 5 acres? Do they need so much waterfront?

Answer: You would have to consult Washburn and Doughty.

Question: Have any estimates of revenue generation been worked up?

Answer: No, not yet.

Question: How deep is the water on the south side of the pier? Could ship-building go there?

Answer: Water is not as deep on the south side of the pier.

Upfield / Affordable Housing Questions

Question: How was tax revenue from 14 houses estimated for the community design workshop?

Answer: The estimated tax revenue is based on mil rates and estimated values for the area.

Question: Cost of tuition for students in new housing?

Answer: Unknown.

Question: How can we plan for 14 units of housing when aquifer details are unknown?

Answer: The DEP will work closely with the Town to make sure environmental regulations are followed.

Question: Didn't the DEP say almost any amount of water could be pumped from the wells?

Answer: Yes, and they are very willing to work with Harpswell to make sure desired uses will happen on the site.

Question: Possibility of connecting new housing to Mitchell Field? By road or trail?

Answer: Yes, very possible.

Question: Could residential development be for rental instead of home ownership? How long will housing stay affordable? Would land be sold to private developer or owned by town?

Answer: These are policy issues that will be decided by Town of Harpswell. The Town could decide to have rental properties, and many different options for leasing, etc.

Question: Where did the number 14 come from?

Answer: It is an average of housing units from the community design workshop, and fits with the average number of acres most teams gave to affordable housing.

Question: Could an amphitheater be located upfield?

Answer: Yes.

Comments

- Allow for expansion of fire station
- Plans should be presented with and without Washburn and Doughty
- No benefit of boat ramp for rest of community
- Fields not currently suitable for passive recreation, need improvements (mowing and other maintenance) and reconfiguration
- It is very exciting to see tangible plans being made for Mitchell Field – thanks to everyone who helped with the process